

**Washington, D.C.** - The House of Representatives Wednesday overwhelmingly passed bi-partisan legislation that increases funding for the State Department Rewards Program. The Counter-Terrorist and Narco-Terrorist Rewards Program Act, sponsored by Rep. Henry Hyde (R-Illinois) and co-sponsored by Rep. Mark Kirk (R-Illinois) and Rep. Tom Lantos (D-California), doubles the reward money to \$50 million for the capture, or information leading to the capture of Usama bin Laden.

The bill, a result of Kirk's recent mission to Afghanistan and Pakistan, is intended to help the U.S. military and operations like "Mountain Storm" to capture or kill terrorists. The bill also expands the eligibility criteria to receive an award, authorizes non-monetary awards and focuses on increased advertising of the reward available for the capture of Usama Bin Laden.

"Our bill will give the State Department more flexibility in the types of rewards it gives," said Kirk. "It allows them to provide rewards in commodities- a tractor or farm animals- as well as cash. In this remote region, key commodities, such as a truck, can provide as much incentive as a large cash bounty."

Congressman Kirk led a congressional mission to Afghanistan and Pakistan in January to review the rewards program and opportunities for the United States and its allies. He met with several military personnel stationed along the Afghan-Pakistani border who expressed concern over whether the rewards program was helping in the capture of Usama bin Laden. Outdated State Department advertising of its rewards was having little impact in a region where very few people know how to read, or write.

As a result of Congressman Kirk's mission, H.R. 3782 was introduced. The legislation dramatically improves disseminating information about the rewards program by authorizing the State Department to conduct media surveys, including analyses of media markets, means of communication, and levels of literacy in countries determined to be associated with acts of international terrorism. In accordance with the survey findings, the State Department has the authorization to create advertisements about the rewards program so they may purchase radio or television time, or newspaper space to disseminate the information.

"Advertising in the languages the people of these areas speak will bring us closer to the capture of Usama bin Laden," said Kirk. "There are many popular forms of communication the State Department has not utilized in Afghanistan and Pakistan, such as BBC radio that broadcasts in Pashto, the language of the majority of people living in these remote areas, and GEO-TV, a successful independent cable news network in Pakistan. It is very important that we work with our allies in the UK and Pakistan to carry our message on trusted news services to the people

in the area where bin Laden is likely to be hiding."

The bill also addresses the need to update the rewards program to reflect bin Laden's growing reliance on the sale of heroin to finance terror. Kirk's visit to Afghanistan revealed bin Laden is no longer supported by Wahabi and other foreign donations.

"Usama bin Laden has become one of the world's heroin kingpins," Kirk said. "The Rewards Program needs to include rewards for the arrest of Drug Kingpins and their lieutenants who are connected to terror."

As a staffer under Representative Ben Gilman, Congressman Kirk drafted changes to the current Rewards Program. The bipartisan legislation he drafted was passed in 1999 that increased the reward offer from \$5 million to \$25 millions and also allowed payment for the arrest of suspects indicted for United Nations War Crimes. The program yielded impressive results in the Balkans where many Persons Indicted For War Crimes (PIFWCs) were arrested or killed. Over a number of years, the program has been very successful in bringing murderers of Americans to justice, most notably, Uday and Qusai Hussein and Mir Amal Kanzi, who shot several Americans outside the CIA's entrance in Virginia years ago.

The Counter-Terrorist and Narco-Terrorist Rewards Program Act has the strong backing of President Bush. The bill now moves to the Senate where it has strong bi-partisan support.